



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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Accelerate Health by Switching Gears, Commuting Another Way

Lewis and Clark County, in partnership with local groups and businesses, has for the second year in a row organized a month-long effort to encourage people to find healthier ways to travel around town.

Entitled “Switching Gears,” the initiative will take place throughout the month of May. It will include safety education, special events, and fun incentives for people who actively commute by walking, bicycling, riding the bus, or carpooling.

The purpose of the initiative is two-fold: to encourage individual health through physical activity and to improve community health by reducing traffic and vehicle emissions.

“Healthy communities are those that give us opportunities to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives,” said Gail Beckner, health education specialist with the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. “Studies show that people who walk or bicycle to work, school, or businesses have healthier lifestyles and lower rates of obesity.”

Some of the Switching Gears events include:

- **Bike/Walk to Work Commuter Challenge.** Individuals or teams can log the miles they walk or bicycle to work during the month of May and become eligible to win prizes. Register at www.bikewalkhelena.org.
- **National Bike to School Day.** The National Center for Safe Routes to School is coordinating the first-ever National Bike to School Day on Wednesday, May 9. The event aims to bring schools, families, and children together to build awareness of the need for communities to be more bicycle-friendly. In Helena, school resource officers will visit selected schools to encourage bicycling and provide education on bike safety.
- **Recycle Your Cycle.** The Helena Safe Routes to School Committee will host a bicycle swap, especially for youth who’ve outgrown their bikes, on Saturday, May 5, 9 to 11 a.m., at the small park across from Helena Middle School.
- **Learn to Ride in Traffic Clinic.** This free clinic will provide “wheels on the ground” experience as well as excellent tips for a safe urban riding experience. Meet at Women’s Park Saturday, May 12, from 9 to 10 a.m.

- **TAWSE Bike to Work Day.** The Try Another Way State Employees (TAWSE) group will host displays and vendors in the Capitol rotunda May 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Prizes, food, and safety training sessions are also scheduled.
- **Ales for Trails.** Narrate Church will hold a fundraiser May 11 with proceeds going to Friends of the Centennial Trail. The event will begin at 5 p.m. at the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds and will include live music and locally produced ales.
- **Commuter Stops.** Check the Switching Gears Calendar at www.bikewalkhelena.org to learn about commuter stops around town. Active commuters will be treated to beverages, snacks, and camaraderie on their way to work.
- **Free Bike Safety Checks.** Big Sky Cycling and Fitness will offer these all month.

For more information, including a full calendar of events, visit www.bikewalkhelena.org or contact Gail Beckner at 457-8924 or Laura Erikson at 447-8383.

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.

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